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H.D. and the Angelus Militans

Suzanne Hobson

- 1 Modernist writers were not slow to recognize that there was an easy analogy to be made between literary and visual representations of the war in heaven and the aerial warfare that was to distinguish 20th-century conflict from all terrestrial precedents (Alldritt 114). The military angel was a ready-made figure for the kinds of strategies and technologies of warfare that were experienced for the first time in World War I and more widely and to more devastating effect in World War II. D.H. Lawrence, for example, recognized the resemblance between Zeppelins and warring angels as early as 1915. He writes to Ottoline Morell that “[i]t was like Milton—there was war in heaven. But it was not angels. It was that small golden Zeppelin, like a long oval world, high up” (Boulton 1981, 390). Wyndham Lewis offers his own version of Milton’s “war-in-heaven” in *The Human Age* (1955) and describes this war as the reverberations in the celestial sphere of the Blitz that was occurring on earth (Lewis 1955, 67). H.D., an American-born poet resident in London during the Blitz, remembers how rumours of “bombs on wings” (H.D. to Bryher, 16 June [1944]) heralded the arrival of the first V2s and compares the sound of bombs to that of angels’ wings in her WWII epic, *Trilogy*: “whirr and roar”; “zrr hiss” (H.D. 1997, 19, 58). Of course, these writers were neither the first nor the last to connect warfare with angels. As Lawrence and Lewis indicate, Milton provides the most well-known version of this image in *Paradise Lost* while Thomas Pynchon explores the same V2-angel connection as H.D. in *Gravity’s Rainbow* (1973). But this analogy does gain a particular force in writing by and about first-wave modernists because of their association with radical and utopian dreams and, by the early 1940s, with what was often perceived as the cutting off or, worse, perverse fulfilment of these dreams in the hail and fire of WWII (Perloff 3). In the 1910s and 20s the angel had featured in texts by D.H. Lawrence, Allen Upward and W.B. Yeats as an emblem of the desire for a flight from what Yeats calls the “steel trap” of the machine into the rarefied and ultimately unified universe represented by Balzac’s hermaphrodite angel, Séraphita.¹ Post-WWII, H.D. and Lewis focus on an angel equivalent to the failure of this same project: a military angel that threatens to bind the imagination more tightly to the machine-world from which its predecessor in Balzac had offered release.

- 2 The background to this change in iconography was the change in the way in which modernism itself had come to be perceived. By 1950, modernism's utopian imagination had begun to look at best embarrassing and at worst as though it had concealed a diabolical purpose all along. While not decisive, WWII was instrumental in this change of mood. As Marina MacKay points out, in the war modernism seemed to find both its realization and its dissolution; it was vindicated in its vision of an England that is "post-imperial, anti-heroic and unwanted", but this was less of a triumph than a "winding up": "either you had no purpose / or the purpose is beyond the end you figured" (Eliot quoted in MacKay 1). To its detractors and would-be replacements, modernism seemed to have been overtaken by the very forces that it had sought to unmask. J.F. Hendry, for example, opens the *New Apocalyptic anthology* for 1940 by referring his readers to those among his predecessors who had foreseen the terrible outcome of "machine-made" logic but whose reaction was alternatively bizarre, escapist or defeatist: D.H. Lawrence withdrew into sex and the subconscious, Auden into politics and Wyndham Lewis into paranoia (Hendry 12-13). Curiously, Milton himself plays a cameo role in this story of modernism's wartime decline. As critics turned in increasing numbers to *Paradise Lost* to find what Wilson G. Knight calls a "prefiguration" of "our own gigantic, and itself archetypal, world-conflict" (Knight 83), they also turned away from Eliot who had argued influentially in 1936 that Milton's style was wholly artificial and his poetry a wrong-turning in the history of English literature.² To the minds of some of Eliot's critics, the war tipped the balance decisively in favour of Milton and away from modernism as the poetry most appropriate to the times: "The rejection of Milton as our great master of the 'artificial style' can now be seen as the inevitable achievement of the first half of the 20th century, and it has died with the poetic movement that caused it" (Gardner 3).
- 3 Detloff, Perloff and Mellor have argued persuasively that literary modernism persists beyond the endings once regularly imagined for it. Nonetheless these endings are imagined and give rise to a strand in post-war writing in which modernism's utopian aspirations survive at the cost of a certain embarrassment, self-consciousness or embattled sense of going against the tide. The *angelus militans*, I argue, is one of the emblems of the *arrière-garde* through which writers such as H.D. and Lewis articulate their continued attachment to a vision of a transfigured world while also expressing their difficulties with the "poetic movement" with which this vision and their own writing had become inextricably linked. These difficulties include modernism's obsession with the machine, its sense of a divine mission or superhuman destiny and, in the case of H.D., its masculine bias. Space will not permit an investigation of both of these writers though Lewis also uses the military angel as a vehicle to explore the various sex-obsessions of his contemporaries. In what follows, therefore, I focus on H.D. and her attempts to recover a remarkably unpromising image—the military angel—for a pacifist critique of war and, closer to home, an attack on the modernist "machine-made" logic that had contributed to a climate in which military and masculine passions could flourish.

1. Angelic military orders

- 4 H.D.'s interest in angels is recorded in the acknowledgements to Gustav Davidson's *Dictionary of Angels* (1967), which pay lavish tribute to his friend and correspondent

—“an avid reader in esoterica; also a devout believer in angels, whom she invoked by name and apostrophized in song” (Davidson xxviii-iv). It seems unlikely, however, that Davidson was H.D.’s source for her pacifist reworking of images of angels of war. Under this heading Davidson records only three names: Michael, Gabriel and Gadriel (Davidson 46). Cross-referencing this entry with those on the individual angels it becomes clear that what Davidson has in mind is the kind of heroic and majestic warrior exemplified by Milton’s prince of “celestial armies” (Milton 314). Milton is a named source in two out of three of these entries along with Origen and the recently discovered dead-sea scrolls which identify Michael as the Prince of Light leading the armies of light against the powers of darkness. Other writers known personally or at least read by H.D. had something of a Miltonic bias too; in the case of Henry Adams this appears as an all-out preference for what he calls the “masculine and military passions” of Milton’s Archangel as opposed to the feminine values encoded in the figures of nineteenth and early 20th-century art (Adams 30-1).

- 5 Adams describes these priorities in his curious art-history book, *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres*. First published privately in 1904, this book was rescued from obscurity in 1913 as a response, claims its editor, to the need to provide new ideals and standards for artistic attainment in a declining modern era. In an age, he says, that has created only the industrial horrors of the Black Country in England and Iron City in America, it is necessary, to imagine that there might be another 13th century yet to come, that the architectural achievements of Mont Saint Michel and Chartres might one day be repeated (Adams viii). This idea, common to literature from the late nineteenth and early 20th-century periods, is based on two related presuppositions: first, a view of the modern world as corrupt (a corruption often revealed in the lamentable condition of the arts) and second a romanticized vision of medieval society as a mysterious centre of creative life and spiritual renewal. For Adams, the angel which once stood at the summit of the tower on Mont Saint-Michel is a symbol of what has been lost:

The Archangel stands for Church and State, and both militant. He is the conqueror of Satan, the mightiest of all created spirits, the nearest to God. His place was where the danger was greatest; therefore you will find him here. [...] So he stood for centuries on his Mount in Peril of the Sea, watching across the tremor of the immense ocean,— *immensi tremor oceani*,—as Louis XI inspired for once to poetry, inscribed on the collar of the Order of Saint Michael which he created. (Adams 1)

- 6 This medieval society, continues Adams, valued energy over intellect and a simple faith (both in celestial and terrestrial lords) over reason and logic. Its people were in absolutely no doubt as to their role on earth; it was, says Adams, like that of the military angel to fight and stand guard over one another. Their passions were military and, he insists on this point, purely masculine in nature. Adams implies that the progress of art and literature since this medieval high point has been of the nature of a decline: from the masculine and military passions of the *Mont Saint Michel* and the Order of Saint Michael which it inspired to the feminine and bourgeois architecture of the late gothic and to a style of poetry that meant that audiences simply did not recognize Milton’s direct, military style when it arrived (Adams 30, 34).
- 7 Adams is not alone in this period in demanding a return to medieval military orders, to a monastic or angelic army along the lines of Louis XI’s Order of Saint Michael. In 1910, for example, the Imagist poet Allen Upward suggested the foundation of an “Order of the Seraphim” modelled on the Hospitaller Knights of St John. More famously, in 1915, D.H. Lawrence proposed the formation of an “Order of the Knights of Ranim”, an

order that was again to be modelled on the example set by the angels; in *Rananim*, Lawrence insists, “we will all be Princes like the angels are” (Boulton 1981, 273). At first sight, Lawrence’s vision is one of equal participation for all colonists in the foundation of his new community. But as with Upward’s “Order of the Seraphim”, there is the potential for exclusion here and, in particular, the exclusion of women. This fact did not go unnoticed by H.D. In *Bid Me to Live* (1960), her *roman à clef*, H.D.’s fictional counterpart, ‘Julia’, reflects on a promise from ‘Rico’ (Lawrence) that “[w]e will go away together where the angels come down to earth” (H.D. 1960, 86). This is certainly a fictionalized version of a real invitation from Lawrence for H.D. to join him in founding *Rananim*. In a letter to Catherine Carswell dated 27 October 1917, Lawrence includes H.D. (Hilda Aldington) in a list of his chosen pioneers, setting sail for a destination that at this stage was identified as the East slope of the Andes: “Freida and I, and Eder and Mrs Eder, and William Henry and Gray, and probably Hilda Aldington and maybe Kot and Dorothy Yorke” (Boulton 1984, 173). While H.D.’s real response to such an invitation is unknown (little of her correspondence with Lawrence survives), the fictional response of Julia in *Bid Me to Live* is revealing:

She did not turn to look at Rico, for the actual face of Rico was projected out, it was a mask set among fruit-trees. It was Satyr in a garden. We will go away where the angels come down to earth. What sort of angels? (H.D. 1960, 85-6)

- 8 “What sort of angels?” is an astute question. The dream of equality in a Utopia where “we will all be Princes like the angels are” dissolves into a nightmare of male sexuality, fertility and power. Rico’s face is a fetish object or a Satyr, the half-bestial spirit whose days are usually spent in the pursuit of nymphs. It resembles a “mask among fruit trees”, perhaps one of the idols that, according to the *Golden Bough*, are hung in orchards to ensure the fecundity of the crop and by extension that of the (male) king. Over the course of *Bid Me to Live*, Julia gradually becomes convinced that Rico’s forward-thinking angelic communism disguises an atavistic desire for a tribal society in which one man’s word is law; in a game of Charades towards the end of the novel Julia’s new lover Gray plays the “Angel at the Gate” while Rico “of course” is “Gawd a’-mighty” (H.D. 1960, 112).

2. H.D.’s sort of Angels

- 9 Angels feature prominently in H.D.’s WWII poetry, most famously *Trilogy*, and while it is possible to glimpse among these angels the “flash” of a Miltonic sword their message runs pointedly counter to that which she associated with the usual angelic suspects. In 1950, H.D. printed three poems in a pamphlet, *What Do I Love?*, to send out to friends as a Christmas card; it contained three poems, “May 1943”, “R.A.F.” and “Christmas 1944” written during WWII but which, according to a letter included in H.D.’s *Collected Poems*, did not seem suitable for inclusion in *Trilogy* (H.D. 1983, 621-2). These poems explore the connections between aerial warfare and “war in heaven” but in place of a sky filled with the noise and majesty of Miltonic forces they offer a sky evacuated of life: the pilots are fallen and the angels have been dispersed by the incursion of technology into the atmosphere. The first poem, “R.A.F.”, records an encounter with a pilot on a train. Inspired by a series of wartime séances with Arthur Bhadhuri during which H.D. believed she had made contact with the spirit-messengers of dead pilots, “R.A.F.” opens an angelic channel of communication between the poet and the pilot:

Fortunately, there was no time
 for lesser intimacy
 than this—
 instantaneous flash
 recognition, premonition, vision ;
 fortunately, there was no time
 for the two-edged drawn-swords
 of our two separate twin-beings
 to dull ; no danger of rust ;
 the Archangel's own fine blade
 so neatly divided us
 in the beginning. (H.D. 1983, 488)

- 10 Such moments of angelic intimacy are not unusual in H.D.'s work; *Asphodel* contains a similar episode in which Hermione and Vane realize that they are kindred spirits: "We were two angels with no wings to speak of, with the angelic quality that comes, that goes, that will come, that will go" (H.D. 1992, 142).. In "R.A.F.", however, the meeting is uncanny. The archangel's sword suggests a rip in the tissue of ordinary time—the expanse over which lives are usually lived and in which things gradually "dull" and "rust"—that lets in shards of another kind of time; this is a moment of recognition (the return of a face from the past) that is also a premonition (a face not yet encountered) which takes precisely "no time" to unfold. Moreover, this fleeting wartime encounter is to come back literally to haunt H.D. as the pilot returns from beyond the grave to maintain a watchful presence by her desk. She wonders whether he has come as a "winged messenger" or merely dropped in out of a "sort of politeness [...] to explain / why he had not come sooner" (H.D. 1983, 490).

- 11 In the third poem in the sequence, "Christmas 1944", angels are not so much the cause of disruption in the temporal and spatial orders as, together with their human counterparts, the victims of the turbulence brought about by war:

The stratosphere was once where angels were ;
 if we are dizzy and a little mad
 forgive us, we have had
 experience of a world beyond our sphere
 there—where no angels are ;
 the angel host and choir
 is driven further, higher
 or (so it seems to me) descended to our level
 to share our destiny. (H.D. 1983, 502)

- 12 Here not only temporal but also spatial coordinates are infuriatingly difficult to grasp. Awkward rhymes on markers of place and time in this passage—*where, were, there, where, me, destiny*—serve only to disorientate, to prevent a clear grasp of where it is that angels can now be located. It is clear that they have been forced out of their old home, presumably by the colonization of the stratosphere by technologies of war, but H.D. leaves a question, a moment of doubt, as to whether this incursion has forced them further away from the human or in fact driven them down to earth to "share our destiny". Similarly the move from "where angels were" in the first line of the first stanza to "where no angels are" in the last suggests a kind of temporal collapse; the gap between past presences and absences experienced as if they were physically present is here reduced to a minimal, grammatical shift, making it difficult to conclude, after all, where it is and when it is the angels are not there. In *Ghostwriting Modernism*, Helen Sword describes the spatial and temporal dislocation in H.D.'s WWII poetry as a

precondition of “physical and emotional survival” during the war. If a new world and new possibilities for living are to be fashioned out of a ruined present, then it is necessary, she explains, to move boundaries of space and time: “Only by affirming and admitting the past [...] only by exposing the crypts of our minds to the open air—can we withstand the assaults of the present” (Sword 128). This is the human and humanizing aspect of H.D.’s rewriting of spatial and temporal co-ordinates in these poems. But the disarrangement of celestial co-ordinates suggests something else besides, something much closer to Lewis’s menacing portrait of a terrestrial combat that sends shock waves through the neighbouring celestial atmosphere. Changes in the nature of warfare have opened out the time and space in which human lives are lived so that it encroaches on the time and space of the angels and the effect, for H.D. is vertiginous; it is as if the horizon marking the end of time has dissolved into the everyday, making it impossible for bodies both angelic and human to orientate themselves in relation to a fixed point.

- 13 Needless to say if H.D.’s war-displaced angels are to be included under the heading of “angels of war” then that phrase has to encompass more than the kinds of angels that inspired the monastic armies of her contemporaries. A better match might be found with Paul Klee’s *Angelus Militans* (1939): one among over fifty line drawings of angels of which the *Angelus Novus* owned by Walter Benjamin is perhaps the best known. These drawings are figurative but barely so, composed of angular lines and geometric shapes which suggest rather than denote disassembled bodies and childlike, wide-eyed expressions. Many of their titles imply uncertainty, indeterminacy and an approach to a goal (either the completion of the picture itself or a more nebulous act of metempsychosis) that has been aborted or abandoned in the preparation: “*Unfinished Angel, In the Anteroom of Angelhood, Forgetful Angel, More Bird than Angel, Angel Still Female [not yet male?], Angel Still Groping, Angel Still Ugly, Angel as Yet Untrained in Walking, and Angel Applicant*” (Franciscono 361). The *Angelus Militans* does not fit this pattern exactly; Will Grohmann argues that it provides a “menacing” contrast and its title which, like the *Angelus Novus* is borrowed from Latin rather than Klee’s more usual German *Engel*, gives this angel a liturgical gravitas that is missing from some of the more domestic sounding angels in the series (Grohmann 357). In this instance at least, the pathos comes from the gap between the image of the church militant conjured up by its title and the poverty of the image itself. This is an angel that has come loose from its moorings in religious art and literature and barely even knows any more which way is up: Klee’s signature arrows point in two different directions in this drawing while the angel’s head, turned upside down, is resting on the outline of an arm in a pose suggestive of thought or bewilderment.
- 14 Massimo Cacciari reads Klee’s angels in general as an emblem of the religious unknowing with which modernism is readily identified. These angels retain some of their popular attributes relating to watchfulness or guardianship, but they no longer know why or what they are meant to be guarding:

Maybe they are still immortal, but certainly not the “dawn red ridges of all creation.” As guardians and custodians they remain riveted to the threshold. They know the heart of the “sanctuary” as little as we do. If they have ever gone beyond that limit and visited inside, they have forgotten it—and have forgotten that they forgot. The strongest among them accompany man up to the threshold; they watch him waiting. They envy his hope—envy the necessity of his questioning and invoking. (Cacciari 22)

- 15 Klee's modernist angels are emptied of their religious content and persist only in hollowed-out form as a melancholic reminder that something has been lost even if we are no longer sure what that something might have been. Applied specifically to the *Angelus Militans* and to H.D.'s war-displaced angels, Cacciari's reading suggests that so far as angels survive a conflict usually read for its secularizing tendencies they do so in diminished form: forced down to earth "to share our destiny" or left paralyzed on a threshold that they dare not cross to see what lies beyond. There is more than a suggestion that the angel is exhausted in this moment, or rather, to qualify this point, that they are finished as a source of popular consolation such as that represented by the Angels of Mons in WWI.

3. The Society of Angelic Lore

- 16 H.D.'s angels are not, however, secularized creatures of the type identified by Cacciari. While Klee's military angels gesture towards a world emptied out of religious consolation altogether, H.D.'s merely redirect attention from the military and masculine faith celebrated by Adams to an esoteric set of beliefs that eschew conflict and sexual difference in favour of peace and a precarious state of equilibrium between the sexes. In her late poems, H.D. increasingly draws the reader into a world of specialisms, into a world fully revealed only to a circle of adepts who at this stage in her life included such contemporaries as Denis de Rougement and Robert Ambelain as well as historical personages, most importantly the leader of the 18th-century Moravian Church, Count Zizendorf. In *The Gift*, written during WWII and published only in 1998, H.D. writes about a secret that had once been guarded by the Moravian Church and had subsequently been lost (H.D. 1998, 155). This was a "plan" or more accurately still a "secret society" whose purpose was to overcome divisions and work towards unity and world peace (Augustine xxix). Perhaps this example led H.D. to consider formalizing her own occult connections in a secret society. In a letter dated August 1960, Gustav Davidson suggests that, with H.D., he had plans to form a Society of Angelic Lore: "I see that Kenneth Rexroth, one of our west coast poets, has written an article on the Kabbala. If we ever get around to organizing our Society of Angelic Lore, he may be a good person to invite to join. Robert Ambelain would be another, if you can get him to reply to a letter" (Davidson to H.D., 2 August 1960). On the face of it, the invitation sounds remarkably like that which Lawrence made to H.D. some years earlier, though plausibly the reference to the occult expert Ambelain was enough to convince H.D. that what was on offer here was a far cry from the monastic armies envisaged by the likes of Lawrence and Upward.
- 17 Quite how different these two models are is conveniently demonstrated in the final sequence of poems that H.D. wrote in her lifetime, *Hermetic Definition*. Like Adams's *Mont-Saint-Michel*, "Red Roses for Bronze" borrows its vision of war in heaven from an architectural source: not, on this occasion, from the 12th-century church that stands in peril of the sea in Normandy, but from the Cathedral of Notre Dame and more specifically from the pagan and occult imagery that Robert Ambelain identifies as hidden in the architecture of the cathedral. Using Ambelain's *Dans l'ombre des cathedrales* (1939) as a guide, H.D. takes her readers on a tour of the esoteric meaning of the symbols and figures carved around the doors of Notre Dame: the Door of the Virgin, the Door of the Last Judgement and the Door of Saint Anne. It is on the threshold of the

Door of the Last Judgement that the initiate encounters, for the first time in this poem, the military angel:

I stand again on the threshold
 on my left are the angels Astaroth, Lilith
 on my right, Raphael, Michael ;
 Astar—a star—Lili—a flower—
 Raphael, Michael—why are you there ?
 would you guide me with dignity
 into a known port ?
 would you champion my endeavour ?
 Astaroth, you can not be malign
 with so beautiful a name
 have you brought me here ?
 Lilith, why do they call you a devil
 with Lucifer and Asmodel ? (H.D. 1972, 17)

- 18 H.D. lines up her forces in this passage exactly as does Milton in *Paradise Lost*: Raphael and Michael stand on one side as the commanders of the forces of light, and Lucifer and Asmodel (named as Asmodeus/Asmodai by Milton)³ on the other as the leaders of the powers of Darkness. Beyond this point, however, she follows a very different path. The first stanza reworks a passage in Ambelain in which he describes the panel immediately above the door of the Last Judgement. This shows Saint Michael and Satan engaged in the weighing and dividing of souls while “on the left of the demon, are two horned devils leading 10 of the damned linked by the same chain [and] on the right of the Archangel are arranged 10 of the elect” (Ambelain 146 [translation mine]).⁴ Ambelain insists that this scene is to be interpreted as an eternal equilibrium between two principles, the two forces centripetal and centrifugal: it is absolutely not to be seen as a struggle. H.D. repeats Ambelain’s stress on equilibrium, echoing in the arrangement of her line-endings and the caesura in the third line the balanced weighting of Ambelain’s French. She departs from her source, however, in naming specifically female demons: Lilith and Astarte or Astoreth, the name under which the Jews worshipped Astarte. By a process of lexical alchemy—the door of the Last Judgement is, says Ambelain, associated with alchemy—these demons are freed from their association with evil: Astarte becomes “a star and Lilith, Lily a flower”. The struggle between good and evil found in Milton becomes a secret summons to peace and to a divine equilibrium that finds no precedent in either the Biblical or the literary canon.
- 19 As pacifist critique, H.D.’s poem depends on a swerve away from what it takes to be the mainstream in religious and cultural values. This is reflected in a change in the position of the angel: if, for Adams, the angel’s place is on the promontory as a symbol of a simple and military faith, then H.D.’s angel belongs on the threshold where, like Klee’s angel, it maintains a calculated distance from the heart of the sanctuary. For Virginia Woolf, in *Three Guineas*—a more forthright attack on masculine and military passions—this threshold position is one that women might turn to their advantage: women should, Woolf argues, form a Society of Outsiders in order to offer critique of and a check on the male rush to war. Possibly, then, H.D.’s Society of Angelic Lore has as much in common with Woolf’s Society of Outsiders as it does with Adams’s or Lawrence’s angelic military orders: both make special (and in H.D.’s case occult) interests into a virtue in the exceptional circumstances created by war. But this ignores the particular significance of the angels in H.D.’s version. H.D. occults her angels in order to distance them from a specific modernist fantasy: that of an unalienated

'angelic' existence in a brotherhood of like-minded men. At the same time, however, these angels reveal traces of the particular historical and cultural circumstances to which the military angel owes its sudden topicality: the *zrr-hiss* of the bombs, the colonization of the "starry sky" by technology and finally the difficulty of sustaining under such conditions the utopian claim to escape the "steel trap" of the machine into a more expansive, and ultimately human, universe.⁵

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NOTES

1. See for example, the angelic couple in Lawrence's *Women In Love* (199). Yeats references the "steel trap" and Séraphita in a letter to Wyndham Lewis reproduced in Lewis's autobiography (Lewis 1950, 127).
2. For Eliot's critique of Milton see "Milton" in his *Selected Prose* and for a discussion of how Eliot's preference for Donne influenced the New Critics see Stephen Burt (342). Partly influenced by Knight, Eliot later modified his view in a lecture delivered soon after the end of the war (Eliot, 1947).
3. Asmodeus/Asmadai appears in *Paradise Lost*, book IV, lines 168-9 and book IV, lines 365-8. Fowler's note on this second appearance points out that "A medieval scheme, which M[ilton] does not seem to have followed regularly, made Asmodeus leader of the fourth order of an evil hierarchy" (Milton, 328).
4. Ambelain's French reads: "A la droite de l'Archange, se rangent dix élus. On notera l'intention, voulue par les maîtres de l'oeuvre, d'égaliser le nombre des damnés et des élus. Rappel de cet équilibre éternel (et non de lutte) entre les deux principes, les deux forces, la centripète et la centrifuge [...] Rappel également de l'égalité des deux pôles, de leur nécessité, de leur besoin d'être."

5. I borrow here from Benjamin's warning in *One Way Street* that it is a dangerous error of "modern man" to ignore the cosmos "and to consign it to the individual as the poetic rapture of starry nights". The "last war", he continues, "was an attempt at new and unprecedented commingling with the cosmic powers. Human multitudes, gases, electrical forces were hurled into the open country, high-frequency currents coursed through the landscape, new constellations rose in the sky, aerial and ocean depths thundered with propellers, and everywhere sacrificial shafts were dug in Mother Earth "(Benjamin 103-4).

ABSTRACTS

This article considers the figure of the *angelus militans* in the World War II poetry of H.D., an American-born modernist who lived in London during the Blitz. While there is a long tradition in art and scripture of representing the angel as warrior, the connection between angels and bombs acquires a particular charge in writing by and about first-wave modernists because of their association with machine-dreams and the supposed cutting-off or perverse fulfilment of these dreams in WWII. This article argues that H.D.'s poetry seeks to recover a vision of peace hidden within the scenes of angelic conflict that feature prominently in the history of European art and literature as well as finding new relevance in the writing of her peers including D.H. Lawrence and Wyndham Lewis.

Le présent article examine la figure de l'*angelus militans* dans la poésie de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale de H.D., écrivain moderniste d'origine américaine, qui résidait à Londres lors du Blitz. Si des représentations de l'ange-guerrier existent de longue date dans les domaines artistique et biblique, l'association de l'ange à la bombe EST particulièrement prégnante dans les écritures modernistes de la première vague, caractérisées par des "rêves de machines" dont la Deuxième Guerre mondiale représenterait prétendument le point de rupture, ou bien l'aboutissement pervers. Cet article s'attache à montrer la manière dont H.D., dans sa poésie, cherche à faire resurgir une vision de paix enfouie dans les scènes de conflits angéliques qui jalonnent l'histoire de l'art et de la littérature européens, ce qui l'amènera à accorder une nouvelle signification aux écrits de ses pairs, notamment ceux de D.H. Lawrence et de Wyndham Lewis.

INDEX

Keywords: H.D., World War II, angel, Angelus Militans, poetry, modernism

Mots-clés: H.D., Deuxième Guerre mondiale, ange, Angelus Militans, poésie, modernisme

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